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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on baseline data from the National Center for Research on Teacher Education to examine the approaches to learner diversity held by prospective teachers participating in five U.S. teacher education programs. Four layers of meaning given to the concept of diversity are proposed: individual, categorical, contextual, and pedagogical views of differences. In surveys and interviews with prospective teachers, it was found that individual and categorical views predominate, with psychological orientations and an emphasis on the individual underlying most of the responses. These beginners value ideals of equality and fairness but have difficulty envisioning concrete pedagogical means towards supporting these goals. Dilemmas that have shaped much of American educational history pose problems for these prospective teachers. These findings raise methodological and conceptual puzzles and hint at implications for teacher education practice. (Author)

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Lynn Paine

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ORIENTATION TOWARDS DIVERSITY: WHAT DO PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS BRING?

Lynn Paine

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Abstract

This article draws on baseline data from the National Center for Research on Teacher Education to examine the approaches to learner diversity held by prospective teachers participating in five U.S. teacher education programs. Four layers of meaning given to the concept of diversity are proposed: individual, categorical, contextual, and pedagogical views of difference. In surveys and interviews with prospective teachers individual and categorical views predominate, with psychological orientations and an emphasis on the individual underlying most of the responses. These beginners value ideals of equality and fairness but have difficulty envisioning concrete pedagogical means towards supporting these goals. Dilemmas that have shaped much of American educational history pose problems for these prospective teachers. These findings raise methodological and conceptual puzzles and hint at implications for teacher education practice.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS DIVERSITY: WHAT DO PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS BRING?[1]

Lynn Paine[2]

> *We are going to assume that all these students are this kind, this set of what we probably grew up with. But they are not. And we are going to have to relate to them.* (Sheila)[3]

This is an essay about the orientations of prospective teachers towards diversity. It considers the importance of diversity as an issue for research on teacher education, offers possible understandings of the concept, reports findings from questionnaires and interviews with prospective teachers, and explores questions and possible implications for teaching and teacher education. This paper, drawing on the baseline data collection of the National Center for Research on Teacher Education, examines what prospective teachers think about diversity as well as ways in which teacher educators and researchers on teacher education can know that.

Why Ask About Diversity?

Why care about the views of prospective teachers on diversity? The quotation from Sheila, an undergraduate who intends to become a teacher, suggests several compelling reasons, which are supported in research. First, as Sheila suggests and Lortie (1975) has shown us, people are drawn to and socialized into teaching in ways that tend to emphasize continuities with the familiar. Teachers traditionally go first to teacher education programs and later to jobs that are very near where they grew up, and they often envision and practice teaching that bears a striking resemblance to that which they were exposed to as students. Given that narrow framework of experience, teachers may assume that their calling will lead them to work with people like themselves.

Yet this assumption is not always accurate, as Sheila suggests in her second point. American schools have in fact grown increasingly diverse as policies opened classroom doors to previously excluded populations and brought together racially and linguistically diverse groups, encompassing wide ranges of abilities and handicapping conditions (Cohen and

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[1]An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988.

[2]Lynn Paine, assistant professor of teacher education is a senior researcher with the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (NCRTE). The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of other members of the NCRTE research staff, especially Marianne Amarel, Joyce Cain, Ada Beth Cutler, Robert Floden, Mary L. Gomez, Frank Jenkins, Bill McDiarmid, James Mead, Susan Melnick, Arden Moon, Barbara Neufeld, Pamela Schram, Suzanne Wilson, and Kenneth Zeichner, as well as the comments from members of the NCRTE Advisory Board, Brian DeLany, Thomas Good, Jeremy Price and two anonymous reviewers.

[3]All student names used here are pseudonyms.

Neufeld, 1981). Recent demographic changes now add urgency to our consideration as schools grow more diverse and our teaching population does not (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 1987; Haberman, 1987; Hodgkinson, 1985). In 1986 while only 10.4 percent of public school teachers were Black, Hispanic, Asian-American/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Natives, 29.6 percent of our public school students came from these backgrounds (Baker, 1989; *Digest of Educational Statistics*, 1988). The prediction is for more representation of these children, as well as more representation of children entering schools from poor families, from single parent families, or with teenage mothers (Hodgkinson, 1985; Young and Melnick, 1988). Movements for teacher assessment and teacher education reform may exacerbate this trend of an increasingly homogeneous teaching force working with an increasingly diverse student population.[4] In addition, political and social movements, followed by educational changes in recent decades, have broadened our understandings of the ways in which diversity exists or the forms that difference can take. While race and class were the salient categories in public discourse about diversity in the 1950s and 1960s, today language, handicapping, learning style, and other categories have entered a more comprehensive discourse about the educationally relevant ways in which people can differ.[5]

It is the recognition of growing diversity demographically and a broadened understanding of difference that leads to Sheila's third point: Teachers have to be able to attend to diversity; they have to be able to "relate to" differences. At this time of teacher education reform, proposals call for preparing tomorrow's teachers to be ready to teach all children well and avoid the "number of predictable pedagogical mistakes that disproportionately harm at-risk pupils who traditionally do not do well in school and who may be unlike their teachers in background and temperament" (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 52). Because there are educational implications (and imperatives) for the ways in which we think about difference, it is important to understand the perspectives intending teachers bring with them to their professional studies.

What Do We Mean by "Diversity"?

There exists a range of meanings given to the concept of diversity in U.S. discourse. I propose four layers of meaning that can help us as we analyze the views of prospective

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[4]See, for example, Anderson (1989). One student discussed this issue very directly in saying

> I come from a small town and . . . ours is very predominantly just white but I think by the time we get to teach and more and more people come in, I think we are going to have a big racial difference and have to be able to just be able to meet each child's need. (Gene)

[5]These understandings are accompanied by practical realities of categories of students being moved through the educational system. By 1986-87, for example, special education students accounted for 10.97 percent of public school enrollment *(Condition of Education, 1988)*.

teachers. These categories are implicit in the literature on educational equity and correspond to clusters of responses that emerged from interviews with students like Sheila. I call these four orientations to diversity views of individual difference, categorical difference, contextual difference, and pedagogical difference. Since my purpose is to apply this framework to our interpretation of findings, I limit the descriptions of orientations to introductory characterizations of what in fact are sophisticated explanations of complex social realities.

In orientation to an *individual difference* the world is seen as full of people who differ in all sorts of ways and on all sorts of dimensions: Some are fat, some thin, some shy, some smart. Most often, an individual difference perspective draws on psychological and biological explanations of diversity. This orientation "directs teachers to seek the sources of pupils' problems and the solution of those problems, in the individuals concerned" (Dale, quoted in Beyer and Zeichner, 1987, p. 319). A second, also very common approach to difference observes patterns of *categorical difference*. Whereas in an individual difference approach diversity is seen as a seemingly random feature of social life, in a categorical view repeating patterns of variation across individuals as noted. Ascribed characteristics such as social class, race, and gender are salient for someone viewing the world from this vantage point. Categories of difference (gender, for example) may be seen as having other characteristics associated with them (behavior, for instance). Yet there is not much direct attention given to examining the social construction of the category (e.g., why gender is a meaningful distinction in our society?) or explaining the nature of the link between the category and its associated qualities. The categorical approach is present in the liberal view of justice which focuses on minimizing difference through concern for access and fair representation of categories, while not challenging the categories themselves (Tong, 1989). Extending our gender example, this means concentrating on removing barriers to girls' and women's participation or changing their socialization patterns (Knoppers, 1988).

The third perspective, that of *contextual difference*, builds on the first and second approaches. From this perspective, differences among individuals occur in patterns, yet these patterns are seen as connected to a social situation or embedded in a larger, dynamic context. From this relational orientation, differences (e.g., women/men) are not fixed and dichotomized, but created, maintained, and changed by their interaction (Grant, 1988; Thorne, 1978). Categorical differences exist in part *because* of the social context; difference is understood as, in part, socially constructed (Mehan, 1989). This approach, in contrast to the other two, takes into consideration causes of difference.

Finally, another approach to diversity considers differences not only in terms of causes but also in terms of implications. For educators, a *pedagogical perspective* on diversity assumes that differences are not simply random and interesting; they are understood as having pedagogical implications--consequences for both teaching and learning. Like

Shulman's (1986) conception of pedagogical content knowledge, this view of diversity necessarily combines understandings of human diversity with knowledge of and skills in ways to respond to or build on diversity in educational settings. The recognition of difference, from this view, cannot be separated from action.[6]

Methods

This discussion draws on the baseline data collection of the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach (TELT) study of the National Center for Research on Teacher Education, a longitudinal study of teacher education in 11 preservice, induction/alternate route, and inservice sites. The NCRTE is examining how teachers learn to teach math and writing to diverse learners through the analysis of what and how teacher education programs teach and what participants learn over time. This article concentrates on only one piece of the larger project: the orientation towards diversity of 233 students at the beginning of their involvement in teacher education programs at the five preservice sites studied by the NCRTE (Dartmouth College, Illinois State University, Michigan State University, Norfolk State University, and the University of Florida).

The sample includes surveys of 174 elementary education majors and 59 English and mathematics majors intending to teach secondary school, as well as interviews with a randomly selected subset of this group; 62 students took part in baseline interviews which included discussion of learner diversity and its consequences for teaching. Whereas the questionnaire was designed to analyze teachers' knowledge and beliefs about subject matter, teaching and learning, learners, the contexts of learning, and learning to teach; the structured, open-ended interview (typically lasting 1 1/2 to 3 hours) was created to explore teachers' assumptions, understandings, and ideas in relation to these teaching domains. Of our questionnaire respondents 96 percent are white and more than 85 percent are female. (In the "intensive" or interview group, 92 percent are white and 82 percent are female.)

The questionnaire and interview approached diversity in different ways. Items on the questionnaire tended to ask students to show the extent of their agreement/disagreement with statements about specific aspects of learner diversity (such as language or handicapping condition) and the significance for teaching practice or learner outcomes, or with statements about the value of different teaching practices aimed at responding to learner diversity (such as ability grouping). The interview questions, in contrast, began with a general question about what differences among students teachers need to consider. Only after often lengthy discussion about categories generated by the interviewee (and the implications of these categories) did the interviewer introduce and ask about specific categories (i.e., gender,

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[6]By action, I mean deliberative action about the pedagogical consequences of difference. I do not mean to suggest that all differences require different action. Rather, that difference needs to be taken into account, including the consideration of the possibility of action.

ethnicity, culture, language, handicaps, and social class), specific subject matter contexts (the teaching and learning of math and writing) and the notion (to be considered and explored by the respondent) that some students are particularly difficult to teach.

The interviews were transcribed and then studied for patterns. Since I view this as a heuristic and exploratory study, I deliberately avoided prior specification of coding categories, but rather looked for emergent categories in the transcripts. Codes emerged from this reading of the interviews, and they were then compared across interviews, with similarities and differences noted. Pattern coding (Miles and Huberman, 1984) was used to identify emergent themes. While I examined the entire sequence of responses about diversity by an interviewee as a unit, I distinguished between those categories generated by the interviewee and those discussed in response to a probe. Through multiple readings an effort was made to look for disconfirming as well as confirming evidence for the themes and hypotheses which grew out of these patterns.

What Do Prospective Teachers Think About Diversity?

Across the five sites studied, in the most general terms, these respondents affirmed the importance of equality in education and rejected certain differences (particularly gender) as important to teachers or as aspects of human diversity that should influence teaching. They did, however, identify family background, motivation, student attitudes and ability as differences that are important for teachers to consider (see Table 1 below). Prospective teachers' conceptions of diversity appear to draw chiefly on an "individual difference" orientation to teaching and society. While our respondents did introduce "categorical differences" frequently into the discussion, they did so because of the close link they saw between patterns of social differentiation and individual attitudes.

Although there was great consensus on the importance of equality and the relative significance of family and motivation, there was also evidence of disagreement in the views of these prospective teachers on specific educational questions related to teaching practices (see Table 2 below). In their interviews (and in their responses to questionnaire items), these future teachers displayed unsureness and a tendency to discuss diversity in simple ways and in terms that highlight enduring dilemmas in U.S. schooling. Their difficulties were greatest when they had to think or talk contextually or ground their claims about difference and fairness in a classroom situation. Clearly, few had either a contextualized or a pedagogical orientation to diversity. Prospective teachers talked about diversity as closely associated with issues of fairness and equal treatment, yet when operationalizing the concepts, they sometimes justified unequal treatment. Four patterns are of particular interest to this discussion: (a) the linkage between diversity and fairness, (b) the dominance of individual an categorical differences in prospective teachers' views of diversity, (c) implicit models of teaching, and (d) difficulties and dilemmas in dealing with diversity.

Table 1

Responses to Questions About What Differences Among Students Are Important for Teachers to Consider

Categories Generated by Interviewee[a]	Percent of Interviewees Generating Category ($N=62$)
Family	69%
Motivation	55%
Ability/IQ	42%
Personality, attitudes, interests	42%
Class	37%
Race	32%
Prior educational experience	31%
Behavior	24%
Culture	24%
Learning style and pace	24%
Gender	23%
Language	21%

[a]Additional categories were generated by the respondents. The ones listed here represent the most frequently mentioned differences.

Table 2

Examples of Questionnaire Responses[a]

Teachers should avoid grouping students by ability or level of performance.

Strongly agree	14.2%
Moderately agree	14.6%
Slightly agree	18.0%
Not sure	18.0%
Slightly disagree	22.3%
Moderately disagree	9.0%
Strongly disagree	3.9%

Required high school courses should have separate classes for low-achievi high-achieving students.

Strongly agree	12.6%
Moderately agree	10.4%
Slightly agree	18.6%
Not sure	23.8%
Slightly disagree	15.2%
Moderately disagree	11.3%
Strongly disagree	8.2%

When working with students from low-income families, teachers should rely prim teacher-directed, focused, whole-group instruction.

Strongly agree	2.1%
Moderately agree	1.7%
Slightly agree	6.0%
Not sure	25.3%
Slightly disagree	24.0%
Moderately disagree	23.2%
Strongly disagree	17.6%

[a] $N = 233$. These questions represent some of a larger group of items.

Diversity and Fairness

Resonating strongly throughout the questionnaire and interview responses is the theme of fairness. When asked to respond to a variety of differences among students, these prospective teachers often prefaced their remarks or wove into the body of their comments a claim about the necessity for fairness. Just over 95 percent of questionnaire respondents agreed in some way that every student should be given an equal chance to speak in class. In interviews they asserted that "all children have a right to, you know, the same privileges" (Leslie), and that even when school policies make distinctions among students (those in English as a second language classes and those not, for example), different students should be treated "as equally as possible" (Lori). Chiefly, our respondents suggested that treating students equally is essential. They held out liberal goals of providing students "all the same opportunities" (Julia) and "reaching everyone" (Lucille).

Many students appeared to hold an implicit framework of equity and fairness which entails minimizing differences or treating different learners the same.

> Boys and girls are different. But in schoolwork, really I don't think you can say, okay, boys are better in math and girls are better in, you know, sewing *I don't think that's fair* [italics added]. You know, everybody is there to do the same amount of work and the same kind of work. (Shelley)

Shelley voiced a commonly held view in arguing that "you should recognize it [difference, in this case, social class] but you shouldn't treat it differently."

For some this version of equity even meant an almost deliberate denial of certain differences. Three categorical differences in particular elicited this response. While 37 percent of respondents made the point of rejecting the importance of gender as a difference teachers should consider, race and social class were sometimes included, though less often. A strong normative element was present in many of these comments, with some students claiming that gender "shouldn't make any difference" (Jesse) or that, despite past significance, "I'm hoping it won't [matter] anymore" (Molly). Another explained that "I don't even like to recognize" gender and social class.

For respondents taking this view, considering gender (and, to a lesser extent, race and class) was a form of "preference or special attention. Girls and boys, I mean, there shouldn't be that much difference," argued Leslie, an elementary education major. Significantly, this rejection of "preference" was regularly associated with categorical differences; concerns about "preferences" did not seem to be present in talk about individual differences. Associated with this implicit connection between difference and fairness is the assumption that teachers can and should meet individual needs. Of survey respondents 70 percent agreed with the view that teachers can teach in ways that accommodate the individual interests and abilities of their students, while only 6 percent of interviewees raised any

reservations about the limitations of individualizing instruction and teachers' ability to meet individual needs.

Individual and Categorical Differences

Discussion of fairness does not preclude recognizing diversity. In fact, when asked to talk about what they see as important types of differences, students were quick to produce verbal lists. A clear pattern emerged, despite the uniqueness of each student's list. Students called on the "individual difference" and "categorical difference" perspectives more frequently than other approaches to diversity. In describing diversity, interviewees regularly started their lists with one of two types of differences. Interview responses were divided almost evenly between those that began with psychological differences and those that focused initially on home background. A very common listing of important differences included a combination of the two.

Psychological differences appeared in many forms: most commonly as variation in motivation, interests, attitudes, personality, learning style and pace, and developmental stage. Background factors most often included family background, and also frequently involved social class, race, and prior educational experience. When discussing family background, interviewees used the terms family, family environment, family life, home environment, parents, and upbringing. In some cases these discussions suggested that family background stood as a proxy for class (and, less often, race and culture), while at other times it was described as associated with but not equivalent to these. Regardless of the term used, background was justified as significant for its effect on children's attitudes and motivation. In other words, social, categorical differences were translated into an individual, psychological category.

Three Aspects of Individual and Categorical Differences

With respect to these orientations to individual and categorical differences, three aspects will be dealt with, specifically the salience of motivation, questions about the neutrality of differences, and a hierarchical view of differentiation.

Salience of Motivation

One of the strongest themes to emerge in these interviews is the central place prospective teachers give to motivation. When asked about differences, about things that make teaching hard, and about differences that affect the teaching and learning of specific subject matter, these respondents regularly brought up motivation. Motivation was associated with family, socioeconomic class, race, culture, and developmental stage of the learner, and was chiefly portrayed as the result of out-of-school factors. It was student motivation alone (regardless of what prompted it) that stood out as the single most

important learner characteristic that would affect the ease or difficulty of teaching students. This finding is striking in its uniformity across interviews which often were otherwise very different. It speaks to an implicit approach to teaching which rests heavily on personality and psychological factors, rather than content or context.

Diversity: Neutral Phenomenon or Education Problem?

In addition to considering *what* differences "count," we should also consider *why* they matter and *how* they affect the teaching and learning situation envisioned by these prospective teachers. In one sense, students conveyed the impression that differences are a natural part of social reality, that differences are common and in some way neutral. "Every class is different" (Lance) and "each child is different" (Louise) were familiar themes. It was in part because of this neutrality of difference that respondents argued that the teacher must treat all students equally and, many argued, individually.

Yet at the same time, an underlying theme in these interviews treats difference as a problem. The viewing of difference in psychological terms was much more often discussed in a neutral fashion, while comments about differences in background more often contained hints of problems. In fact, while the interviewers were careful to use neutral language (such as asking about differences among students that teachers might consider), respondents often used words like "problems" or "barrier" as they discussed categorical differences. Even in rejecting the importance of gender, race, or class, the respondents implied that "difference" is a problem and thus left themselves little room to consider differences as offering opportunities. It was rare to find the student who, as one did, viewed diversity as a positive resource: "You can use someone of a different background as a resource, can use a Vietnamese refugee to talk about [his/her] experience, and recognize differences, because they do exist, and use those as advantages" (Martin). Instead, the majority of our respondents, once they got past claiming the uniqueness of all individuals, often spent the rest of their remarks characterizing a hierarchy of social differentiation.

A Hierarchical View of Differentiation

This hierarchical vision of social diversity draws on what Sleeter and Grant (1988) call a "deficiency orientation." Problems exist for those who are "different" from the norm--for limited English speakers, students of color, and so on. Learners were seen as varying in the degree to which they differed from the norm. Respondents often described in apparently sympathetic tones the "victims" of difference, their need for self-esteem, and a reaffirmation of their "right" to education. This view of differences carried consequences for teachers, according to many of the respondents, although their sense of the consequences tended to be quite general: chiefly, giving more attention, encouragement, motivation, and help.

Most often, problems of diversity were implicitly described as the concern of the individual "different" student and, in some cases, the teacher. The dominant approach of interviewees saw social, cultural, ethnic, and racial differences as significant for their potential barrier to learning, and for their consequences for the individual learner and, to some extent, teacher. A minority of those interviewed considered the impact of diversity on the social relations of the classroom or social organization of learning, as one interviewee did in describing the ways in which "kids definitely perceive those differences, and they oftentimes think of those kids as inferior to themselves, you know, if they have different colored skin or something" (Mindy). Equally unusual was the perspective that saw difference as a positive resource for teaching and learning.[7]

In summary, prospective teachers expressed elaborate visions of ways in which students differ. Psychological and categorical differences predominated, but both of these types mattered to our respondents because of the apparent effect they have on individual behavior and, most important, motivation. Their dominant conception of diversity is thus fundamentally psychological in its orientation. At the same time, however, our respondents tended to view social categories of difference in hierarchical terms and as having individual, not larger social, consequences. For the most part, "difference" was implicitly treated as a problem.

Implicit Models of Teaching

Emerging from the questionnaire and interview responses is a view of teaching which sees all students as different and the teacher as reactive to difference. This model of teaching is essentially individually oriented: the individual teacher working with the individual student and his or her unique set of characteristics. As one prospective teacher characterized this view, "my teaching would differ . . . with the individual" (Sonya).

Associated with this individualistic orientation towards teaching and diversity is the importance assigned to personality and attitude. On the questionnaire, respondents most often cited student attitudes as the sources of success (42 percent) and failure (35 percent) in student's learning experiences (see Table 3). The frequency with which student motivation was mentioned in the interviews echoes this findings. As part of this individualistic orientation, these prospective teachers tended to think of teaching as relating to individual students. As a result, they emphasized teachers' need to find out their

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[7]Another student discussed at length the possibility for using diversity as "an advantage."

> You're supposed to consider all your children, each child is important. And you don't want to have a child to feel left out because he doesn't understand or because he can't speak. And by doing this you help the other children see and you're developing social things, as well, as well as emotional and you're teaching the other children. (Leslie)

Perhaps not coincidentally, this strong advocacy of diversity as a positive force came from a person who had observed this in the educational experience of her own child, who had been exposed to and worked with deaf children in school.

Table 3

Attributions of Student Success and Failure: Responses to Questionnaire Items[a]

When students are successful in achieving intended goals or objectives, that success is often attributed to one of the following sources. Which do you believe is the most frequent source of *success?*

Home background	12.6%
Mental ability	6.1%
Enthusiasm	41.6%
Unique interests	10.8%
Good teaching	19.0%
Teacher's enthusiasm	10.0%

When students fail to achieve intended goals or objectives, that failure is often attributed to one of the following sources. Which do you believe is the most frequent source of *failure*?

Home background	11.3%
Poor ability	2.6%
Student indifference	35.5%
Ignores unique interests	11.7%
Poor teaching	26.0%
Teacher indifference	13.0%

[a] $N = 233$

students' interests; their responses to diversity often centered on developing interests among students who are different from the norm.

The interviews suggest that these prospective teachers at this point in their professional studies tend to consider diversity as something affecting individual students. Except for the occasional interview which pointed out the status hierarchy in classrooms or the positive potential of classroom diversity, the majority of respondents talked about teaching as working either with individual students or with an entire class, where a class is the sum of individuals. Generally absent from these discussions of differences was attention to the social relations of the classroom, the dynamics of group interaction, as well as the school context.

With this orientation, a standard response to diversity is to individualize. Recall that approximately 70 percent of students surveyed agreed with the view that teachers are able to tailor instruction to accommodate individual differences. For many, individualization appeared to mean making the content or approach of class interesting to the individual student. It was the rare respondent who considered other meanings of individualization, took this idea of meeting individual needs to a more specific level, or considered the complexities associated with this practice. One interviewee who did do this described the teacher's obligation to attend to what she sees as differences in cognitive stages and

> teach at two or three different levels at the same time, so that you're not just teaching two people who can understand you analytically, but you're also teaching people who don't have the analysis, the capabilities. . . . So it's really a time where, especially in older grades of elementary, where you have to teach and make sure it's getting across to everybody, and everybody is spread out. (Mavis)

Implicit in the majority of the interviews was the expectation that teachers would find ways, though undefined, to engage all students.

Difficulties and Dilemmas in Dealing with Diversity

The prospective teachers we interviewed talked at length about how children differ and why teachers need to consider diversity. Yet a striking finding from these often lengthy conversations are apparent limitations and difficulties students had in discussing diversity in depth in the context of pedagogical action. Interviewees were most eloquent when talking about individual differences. Where their talk bogged down (and sometimes came to a halt) was when they were asked to consider categorical differences such as gender, race, and social class. Responses tended to be one of two kinds. Some reflected limited exposure to and understanding of the category, as for example, when handicapping conditions were described as simply using wheelchairs. The other common type of response reiterated the

importance of equal treatment or the sameness of educational goals and activities, as in one prospective elementary teacher's claim that "I do not think race is an excuse or reason for anything" (Gabrielle) and another's that, "as far as education goes we educate everyone the same" (Sonya).

Despite our interviewees' oftentimes complex notions of the ways in which students may differ, they had the greatest difficulty analyzing and being explicit about the pedagogical implications of diversity. A prospective secondary school teacher expressed an unsureness many shared regarding operationalizing their concern for equity:

> I have had a deep concern about this [gender differences] for a long time. . . . And if you ask me specifically what, I am not sure whether I can tell you, but I know that is going to be something that I am concerned with and going to be looking for ways of dealing with it as positively as possible. (Sheila)

Many faced difficulties in going beyond familiar phrases about fairness and individual effort.[8] The questionnaire responses similarly reveal a pattern of vagueness or confusion in response to questions dealing with specific teaching practices.

Grouping and Tracking

One particular area of concern is grouping and tracking. The proportion of respondents who were "not sure" about a set of items dealing with these issues was very high, higher than that on most other items dealing with general teaching issues. Between 18 percent and 25 percent of the respondents were not sure how they would operationalize their visions of fairness in the face of classroom diversity and pressures to use grouping or tracking (see Table 2). Asked about the merits of high school curricular tracking, for example, these prospective teachers gave responses that were spread out across the possible 7-point range, with each possible option for agreement or disagreement garnering more than 8 percent but less than 19 percent of the responses. The category receiving the largest number of responses was "not sure," with 23.8 percent of the responses.

This variation and doubt may suggest a general confusion about grouping. Interestingly, at the same time, 64.8 percent of respondents disagreed with the practice of whole group instruction for children of low socioeconomic status (SES) background. What is the alternative? For these students, grouping is one, although many had doubts about it

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[8]One prospective elementary teacher, for example, offered an elaborate and sophisticated conception of ways in which students can differ, putting great stress on family background and problems students may have at home. But when asked how her teaching might differ for students having problems, she replied:

> To all my students, whether they have problems at home or didn't, I would be *fair* [pause] I would work extremely hard to bring up their morale, um, make sure they know that they *can* do, and all they have to do is try, try their best, and um, just let them know it's okay sometimes to be wrong, you know, as long as they try, as you, as you try to better yourself, it's okay to be wrong sometimes. (Linda)

as a viable method. Individualizing instruction is the other common alternative, but clearly there are problems with that, some of which interviewees themselves indicated.[9] The questionnaire and interview data from these teachers indicate that the teacher education students have much disagreement and a good deal of doubt about grouping and tracking. At the same time, they seem unclear about alternatives.

Given the dominance of an "individual difference" perspective, it is not surprising that prospective teachers had a hard time conceptualizing working with *groups* of differing students. Even students who articulated perspectives of categorical difference had trouble when pedagogy entered the discussion; they had a clear sense of categories that make a difference, but they were not clear what to do about these. A view of difference that does not include some understanding of social interaction does not prepare teachers well for thinking about the dynamics of classroom diversity.

Standards and Expectations

A second area of confusion concerns teacher expectations. Our respondents discussed diversity in terms of fairness and equal treatment. Yet they encountered difficulties in discussing teaching standards and expectations. Some students' responses were marked by internal inconsistencies, ones which might suggest potential for self-fulfilling prophecies, particularly for children of color, poor children, or children with limited English proficiency.

The comments of one prospective elementary teacher are a case in point. When asked how her teaching might differ for students who are of different races, she said, "Really no different . . . *but all the kids are going to have to do what I expect of them in class*" (italics added). She was next asked about the way she would respond to language difference. During this section, the interviewer raised the issue of black English by asking "would you accept things that you might not accept from other kids because they have learned in a different way?" Her response was, "Yeah, but um, yeah, I guess" (Shelley). For this teacher, as well as others, identifying standards and expectations for different students poses a problem. Her general orientation is to treat all students the same and expect the same of all, yet when asked about specific differences, she suggests applying different standards for different students.

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[9]As one student explained,

> It's easy to divide up people into 20 different tracks, and totally teach at a certain level and have everyone at the same level, but that doesn't make for very good schooling. I don't believe in tracking. It does make it more difficult on the teacher. It means you have to be aware of these things at all times.

This prospective secondary teacher went on later to say that because of individual difference

> it would be tough to teach the class in a lecture-type way, or in a discussion when peoples' knowledge greatly varies, it'd be tough. You wouldn't be able to teach in that format, you'd have to change your format to every individual, and that might be limited by the number of students you have. It might be impossible. (Martin)

Implicit in much of the discussion of standards was the idea of an orthodox approach or orthodox knowledge. Another prospective elementary teacher said that

> I know people of different, different races have different words to explain things and the way they pronounce things would be the reason for them spelling things wrong, and that has, that has to be taken into account but I think that they should be taught the right way. (Gabrielle)

This student, like many of her peers, took a strong stance on expectations needing to be the same for everyone ("I would expect the same from a black or a Hispanic person that I do from a white person"). At the same time, however, she explained that thinking about how teaching would differ for students who are from different backgrounds "is a hard question because you want to be fair but then you know you cannot expect as much . . . out of one person as . . . another." The tension between accepting difference and maintaining a common standard concerned many prospective teachers, especially as they discussed the teaching of writing.

The difficulty in dealing pedagogically with diversity was particularly evident in the respondents' reflections on categorical differences and teaching expectations. When talking about race, gender, class, language and handicapping conditions as categories of difference, some students invoked educational research to explain and perhaps justify lower expectations for poor children and children of color. The comments by a prospective secondary school teacher, though slightly more explicit than those of many of her peers, typifies an implicit message that was present in many interviews. This particular respondent (R) argued to the interviewer (I) that it would be important for her to know the racial and SES background of her students.

> I: What about their SES and their race would be important for you to know as a teacher?
>
> R: The kids do not perform as well on some tests as others do. They are more concrete oriented. Less abstract oriented. Higher SES kids usually come from a more motivated background education wise. You would have to know that if you have got an entire class of low SES kids you are going to have to work on motivation much more than if you are working with upper middle class kids.

The interviewer then asked about ethnicity, and the student explained:

> R: In Hispanics it has been recently found are the worst educated of all. Blacks have . . . as I understand it they have something against learning sociologically because it is the white thing to do

> and a lot of peer pressure is put on black students not to learn and not to succeed so you would have to know that whether or not these black students are going through peer pressure. (Sena)

For this prospective teacher and others like her, research has provided frameworks for understanding inequality in classrooms that results from social diversity. Given an implicit model of teaching that stresses motivation and the tendency to attribute this to contextual factors, these frameworks may at the same time serve to absolve the teacher of responsibility for challenging that inequity. Much later in the same interview, Sena talks about various types of diversity that are either relatively easy and difficult to deal with. She considers racial diversity potentially difficult because

> the blacks with their peer pressure, they are among their friends all the time. The way they grew up was not to be like "whitey." It is ingrained in their social structure at times, and you cannot expect to change someone's grain just by saying, well, you are in a classroom now and I am your teacher and you are going to change your attitude.

For Sena and her peers, diversity may well be something teachers cannot do much about, and this perspective may be reinforced by research.

In sum, our respondents called on research to define categories of difference and, in some cases, to explain why these categories are important for education. Yet when it came time to define a pedagogical approach, their previous experience and professional courses had not as yet given them any helpful direction, although these experiences and courses may well have supported in some a view which removes teachers from responsibility for learner success. For most of these teacher education students, however, they were hoping to learn from their programs constructive approaches to complex questions about learner diversity. These questions, associated with and highlighting dilemmas all educators face, and ones for which we as a nation have had little success in identifying solutions.

What Questions Do These Responses Raise?

These findings raise conceptual and methodological questions and implications for research and practice in teacher education. These are puzzles associated with four findings: the dominance of the individual, the emphasis on personality and attitude, the diversity of response to concrete situations, and the presence of confusion.

The Dominance of the Individual

Our data point to the power (or popularity) of an "individual difference" understanding of diversity and to conceptions of teaching as working with a collection of

individuals. How can these be explained? There are several possible explanations, yet each requires additional research to be evaluated. One could argue that teaching attracts candidates who highly value the individually and a psychologically oriented approach to diversity, and our sample simply reflects this. Certainly, other research (King and Ladson-Billings, 1988) suggests the dominance of individual over structural-level explanatory frameworks among teacher education students. But are teacher candidates distinctive in this regard? Comparative analysis of teacher education and other students needs to be done if we are to make claims about a distinctive perspective held by our sample (and other prospective teachers).[10]

A second possibility--that this finding reflects the impact of teacher education--also offers itself as an explanation. While our findings draw on baseline data, many of the students interviewed had already had some (small) exposure to teacher education courses and not infrequently referred to educational research they had been exposed to in their programs. But we also know that teacher education is commonly understood as being a weak treatment. It is important to examine the stability of this "individual difference" orientation over time. Comparisons of this baseline data with subsequent waves of data will make that possible. In addition, we need to find out about the orientations to diversity of specific programs and analyze the ways in which programs influence these learners.

A third hypothesis is that what we find represents social rather than professional norms, society-wide ideological foundations rather than specific professional orientations. One finds support for this in the critical sociology of education (see, for example, Giroux and McLaren, 1986, and Popkewitz, 1987). Yet to gain clearer understanding of the force of social norms requires comparisons across cultures. Research on teacher education in China (Paine, 1986), for example, indicates sharp contrasts in approaching the balancing of individual/collective concerns in the United States and China. Cross-cultural research can add to our understanding of the impact of U.S. culture(s) on American teacher education.

Finally, a fourth explanation needs to be considered. What appears as the predominance of an "individual difference" perspective may in fact reflect the methods used to learn about diversity. Given the power of the concept of the individual in U.S. society, teacher education, and social science research, we find it difficult to ask questions about diversity that do not lead to an "individual differences" response. The content of questions often may suggest that differences occur at the level of the individual. It is difficult to find lay language to use in asking questions about patterns of difference, differences in context, and pedagogical implications. Anyon (1981), for example, in her educational research makes an important distinction between static notions of social class (like SES, in which the

[10]The liberal arts students surveyed and interviewed as part of the NCRTE's work can help us test the effectiveness of this explanation.

individual is positioned through static measures of income or occupational prestige) and relational notions of class (which incorporate the dynamic relationships of individuals, work, and social groups). Yet these and other distinctions have not entered popular discourse.

Thus, in analyzing how prospective teachers think about diversity, we need to be aware of the ways in which the concepts, language, and situations posed themselves convey hidden messages about orientations to diversity. Do our questions imply an individual or categorical difference orientation and exclude a contextual approach (like Anyon's use of "class")? The very choice of the word "different," for instance, may imply something that is not the same as "diversity" and may suggest a normative view or a deficiency orientation not intended by the researchers. That is, "different" may suggest variation from a norm, whereas "diversity" may simply suggest heterogeneity. I believe we need to examine more closely the implicit meanings--conveyed and received--by the language and form of research we use. This poses a challenge for future research. It also adds to the difficulty of interpreting our current data.

Each of these possible explanations is plausible and, thus, emphasizes the need for further investigation. Surely the sources of influence on teachers' views of diversity are important to examine, particularly if we are to consider implications for preservice and inservice teacher education. Specific recommendations for action will vary depending on which of these explanations holds. In all cases, however, the dominance of an individual perspective suggests that teacher education needs to help teachers analyze differing interpretations of the causes of educational inequity, consider critically the consequences of an individual difference view, and understand different pedagogical implications of alternative orientations to diversity.

An Emphasis on Motivation, Personality and Attitudes

The data reveal a conception of teaching which relies heavily on relating to students, encouraging their motivation, and building on their interests. When it comes to dealing with diverse learners, personality appears to carry more weight with these prospective teachers than knowledge of content. How do we interpret this finding? I think it is important to consider this attitude in connection with teacher education students' attitudes towards content knowledge, as well as their own educational experiences. While this particular section of the data does not speak to this point, one might hypothesize that the emphasis on attitude represents the prospective teacher's undervaluing of content knowledge in their own academic background.

This finding, like that related to the dominance of the individual, makes us wonder about the ways in which prospective teachers are likely to change over time. Is this emphasis on teaching as relating personally to students something that beginning teachers bring to their professional studies and later abandon? Is this the result of their own

experience as students and hence likely to change when they learn about and experience the teacher's role? Longitudinal study of our sample, as well as a comparison between prospective teachers and experienced teachers on this dimension, could produce interesting and useful information.

This finding also raises some challenges for teacher educators. If prospective teachers approach diverse learners as people to relate to, what is their motivation to think about content in different and potentially constructive pedagogical ways? Considering the stress these beginners place on attitude, teacher educators confront a serious problem in justifying and making meaningful their own courses to students. This is not a new issue. Teacher educators frequently lament their students' conviction that "loving children" is sufficient motivation for teaching. The diversity of learners, however, adds complications to this stress on attitude and "relating." How well prepared will prospective teachers be to deal with the frustrations and dilemmas of teaching when attitude is not enough? How thorough can their commitment to fairness be when certain students will be easier to relate to than others?

These questions, I believe, pose significant challenges for teacher educators. In particular, the data suggest prospective teachers need support in developing a commitment to educating all learners, regardless of frustrations over student attitudes and motivations. Accompanying this is a need for teacher education to help teachers critically examine their implicit model of teaching and offer an alternative view that brings both the social organization of learning and subject matter to the fore in teachers' thinking about teaching (Florio-Ruane, 1989; McDiarmid, 1989).

The Need to Examine Approaches Critically

A third set of questions and implications is brought up by another finding, that is, the high degree of disagreement and uncertainty over specific approaches to diversity. Recall that at the level of general norms, these prospective teachers shared a common valuing of equity. Yet when asked to respond to specific pedagogical decisions (such as grouping and tracking decisions), they displayed wide disagreement and frequently were not sure of their position.

What do we make of this range of opinion? We could see this as a reflection of the diversity among programs of teacher education or as an indication of diversity across the individuals in our sample. The presence of such divergent views may illustrate the lack of teacher education consensus on "answers" to the dilemmas of diversity. Yet I am wary of reading much about programs into this set of data. As baseline data, it comes from students who are at an early stage in their professional studies. In addition, the traditional weak effect of most teacher education programs makes it unlikely that this wide range would be caused by short exposure to teacher education.

Instead, I find it more likely that this variation represents a lack of conse society. The teachers in our sample, like Americans generally, are in agreemen broad democratic principles and abstract ideals, yet there is not a similar agreement these ideals and principles get spelled out in practice. In addition, more important t obvious disagreement over operationalizing instruction for diverse learners is the confidence displayed by our sample. The large proportion of respondents who are "n may indicate broad differences of opinion in society.

This confusion or lack of confidence shown by our respondents may also sig difficulty individuals have in conceptualizing the unfamiliar. Recall that the inter encountered great difficulties during discussions of the contextual or pedagogical impli of diversity. This likely reflects the limited background of prospective teachers; th to lack both experience of the teacher's view of classroom diversity and exposure to different from themselves. Without classroom experience, these prospective teache it hard to talk about classroom complexities or even conceptualize a class as anythin than an additive sum of individuals. In addition, many of our sample were also cons by their own backgrounds, which tend to include schooling in settings absent of heterogeneity. As one prospective secondary teacher explained, "I have not come fr place that has really had that big of a difference. You know, my high school was Caucasian" (Geoffrey).

This study suggests that we need to find out more about how prospective t coming from homogeneous backgrounds understand diversity: What does the con diversity mean to them, and how do they arrive at that understanding? Our first v data collection suggests that these teachers have many abstract labels for categ people, but these labels have not provided them with systematic and dynamic understa of diversity. This preliminary analysis suggests a need to pursue further the themselves, to uncover the individual meanings that these teachers give to categor "family background," "social class," or "handicapped."

At the same time, this pattern of responses raises questions for teacher edu Prospective teachers enter teacher education with little personal experience of diversi they also claim to be drawing on personal experience as a major influence on their te (88.4 percent of the survey respondents agree that a lot of their ideas about teaching from their own schooling experiences). And many talked about learning to te essentially a trial-and-error process. How well prepared will these teachers be to re and respond pedagogically to patterns of difference? If these prospective teach calling upon their prior experience to make sense of that "trial-and-error" process, it i that they will be particularly constrained in their ability to work with the diversit visible and invisible--that is part of all classrooms and to see this diversity as a re

rather than a problem. Certainly this learn-by-doing approach supports the reproduction of familiar practices, including those that perpetuate educational inequity.

Given this orientation, which is essentially conservative, it is not surprising that our baseline data should reveal lack of confidence and confusion. (It can be confusing to apply familiar solutions to what may be very different and unfamiliar contexts and situations.) It will be important to watch over time to see how teacher education programs affect this conservative perspective and, in particular, how this influences teachers' orientations to diversity. Related to this conservative thrust implicit in much of our data is the presence of internal inconsistencies--for example, between ideals of fairness and self-fulfilling prophecies of unequal achievement.

How much of this inconsistency is malleable through professional studies? One could claim that the inherent tensions in the prospective teachers' approaches simply reflect the novice stage of their professional and intellectual development. Yet other research on American education may offer a differing explanation: that these responses reflect fundamental tensions in American education--between ideals of equity and excellence, the rights of the individual and the needs of society, and so on. It will take further observation and interviews with our sample to see if they have exposure to discourse that acknowledges and challenges these contradictory tendencies.

As for teacher education practice, these data imply that students could benefit from broader exposure to the range of human diversity, yet this exposure needs to be supported by conceptual understanding and analytical frameworks. In particular, sustained and direct consideration of contextual understandings of and pedagogical implications of diversity is required to avoid re-discovering that "good liberal intentions are not enough" (Delpit, 1988, p. 296) and instead support teaching that is "multicultural and social reconstructionist" (Grant, 1988; Sleeter and Grant, 1988).

The prospective teachers interviewed were generally hopeful that diversity does not pose impossible challenges. Differences were described as "difficult, but hopefully not impossible. Otherwise, why go into teaching?" (Mercy). At the start of these prospective teachers' professional study, it appears that the teacher's ability to respond to learner diversity is an article of faith, firmly held, deeply rooted in a dominant liberal American vision of education. "Right now I'd like to believe that I can have the ability to overcome these obstacles, and until I'm proven wrong, I'm going to have to believe it" (Monica). For teacher education the obligation is to provide support to Monica and her peers to examine their implicit assumptions critically while grounding their beliefs in dispositions, skills, and knowledge.

Summary

It is clear that prospective teachers bring much to the discussion of diversity. Their views are idealistic and more coherent in abstract than concrete situational terms. Their approach, chiefly psychological in orientation, focuses on "individual difference" and, to a lesser extent, "categorical difference" levels of thinking about diversity. As a result, they tend to see diversity issues as decontextualized. Their view of classroom diversity appears to reflect a static, rather than a dynamic conception of individuals and groups. We find that they bring to discussions of diversity, much as they do to consideration of teaching more generally, an enthusiastic appreciation of personality factors and an underdeveloped sense of the role of content and context.

In discussing diversity, these prospective teachers bring with them no small measure of confusion and tension. They face enormous challenges, thanks to persistent dilemmas that have shaped our educational system and classroom life. These future teachers are unsure of how one makes concrete the abstract goals of fairness and equality. And not infrequently, when pushed to do so, they propose approaches to teaching which treat diversity as a problem rather than a phenomenon; it is a view which places responsibility for the problem often on the student's (or family's) shoulders. The expectations some hold for students of differing backgrounds appear to be unequal, despite claims to the contrary. In short, these teachers bring approaches to diversity that have the potential for reproducing inequality and reflect larger social and historical dilemmas.

These findings pose problems of interpretation. One can make plausible arguments for these findings reflecting diversity within teacher education, but one could also explain these as the products of a society whose educational and social ideologies themselves have a history of long, unresolved tensions. Our interpretation for the present is limited by both data and concepts. These findings also offer real challenges to teacher educators concerned with diversity. The growing diversity within our schools makes the inherently conservative, individualistic orientation of these prospective teachers a particularly worrisome problem. With longitudinal analysis and careful examination of the ways in which we ask questions about diversity, we can begin to make choices between alternative explanations and, only then, about suitable action in teacher education. Both researchers and teacher educators have much to learn about the orientations to diversity that prospective teachers bring to their professional education. We have even more to learn by seeing over time what these teachers make of what they bring.

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